

Girl⚡Powered

The Placement Uncertainty



Sophie Zhang
Dunwoody High School 1264D

Adolescent me was a Barbie AND cars child, a princess AND Superhero girl. Now fast forward a couple years and I began to think about my life as an adult and what I would grow up to be. First, I went through the stage that everyone goes through, the time that one aspires to be a doctor, later realizing that I would probably be one of the least suited people for that career. Following that came author, teacher, musician, interior designer, architect, marketer, basically covering all possible subject areas for a job. However, all of these considerations were only phases, when one passed, I wouldn't really look back. It seemed as if I was considering a new career every several months.



In middle school, I became very interested in engineering, but unlike my previous career interests, this was not a phase. In the past, my future



aspirations could easily be changed by just a poor experience, such as a class or a camp. However, my interest in engineering was never swayed. I grew to love Arduino boards and Mindstorm kits, that exhilarating moment when you see your robot finally complete the “Follow the Tape” test around the classroom floor. Then when high school crept up on me, my future of following the path in engineering fossilized, and I decided to join the school’s robotics team. At the beginning, it was quite intimidating. Not just the transition from

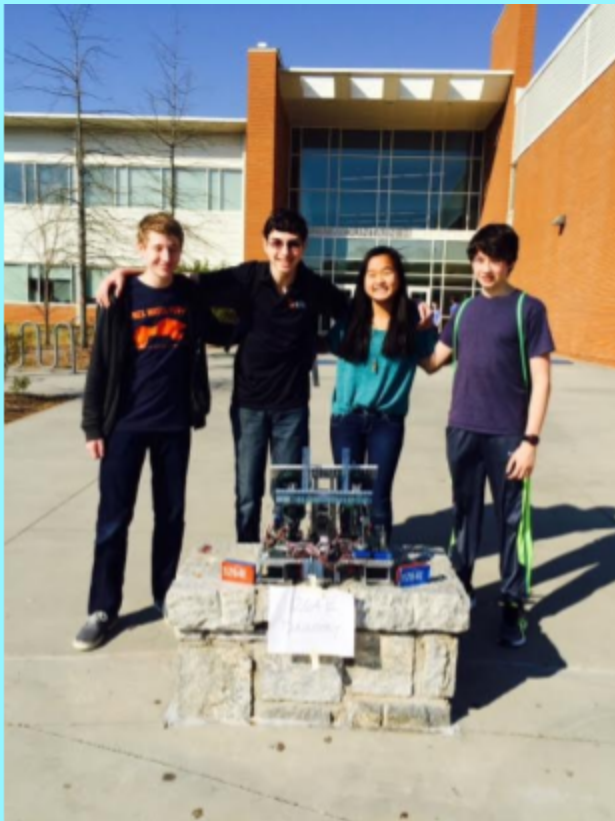
basic lego-like mindstorm parts to steel and aluminum VEX parts, but also the question of “where exactly did I fit on my team?”

Being on the freshmen team, all of us were pretty lost on how everything worked: the challenge, the designing process. Frankly, I had no

idea that a robotics team incorporated so many social and strategic aspects. At the start of the year, I focused on drawing in the design journal, and then, gradually, my attention shifted to building. At our first competition, I was chosen as captain of our team, 1264E, and I began to primarily build because we were short on personnel. This involved multiple nights of staying up till 3 or 4 and grabbing a coffee in the morning as I dragged myself out of bed. It also included lugging around our giant black box around the entire school to get to an elevator, later realizing that there was a different one I could have used to cut my travel distance by at least half.



Honestly, the role of captain was slightly intimidating to me my first year. Because it was my first major leadership position, the concept of dividing and directing work was not very familiar to me. This task was also difficult because I myself lacked the confidence to tell people what to do when I wasn't very sure in what I was doing. My freshmen year flew by and ended on a high note as we finished in eighth chair at our last competition. Though it wasn't enough to get us to state, I felt very proud of our team and what we had been able to accomplish together. Individually, I had learned so much my first year through hands on experience and conversing with upperclassmen.

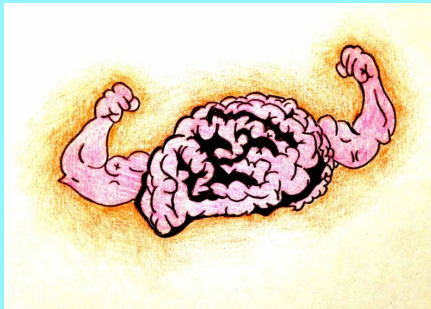


My 9th grade team and I at our last competition

This year is my second year of robotics, and I am now on a different team, where I once again faced the question of where I fit in, re-instigating that feeling of uncomfortability. For most of my team, this is their third year working together, so the main roles and tasks were well covered. This meant that my past position as builder was not as necessary. Though this was very frustrating at first, I began to realize other skills and abilities I had, and my uneasiness subsided. Today I do a whole lot of “here and there” for our team. I am responsible for all the drawings, and I also help out with other aspects of the design journal, as well as occasionally build. This year our team has already qualified for the State Championship with two Excellence Awards. However, besides the awards and



Our robot this year with our two excellence awards



qualification, I feel like this year has really been eye opening. I have learned so much more about building, designing, and other aspects of robotics. So what exactly does girl power mean to me? To me, Girl Power is not proving that girls can be great lawyers, doctors, engineers, or any other profession in life. Girl Power is realizing that someone’s gender does not inhibit them from succeeding or accomplishing a goal. You can choose to walk down any path, and your gender should not determine whether you go right or left. For me, I am grateful that I was given the opportunities to discover and find what I enjoy to do. So far, my robotics and engineering experience has been comparable to building a house, where each year, I gain

a new floor through different structural methods. I intend to continue adding levels to this house throughout the rest of my engineering career and that is something that I am certain of.



Credits

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